

California State Library

Public Libraries and Baby Boomers Online Survey - October 2007 Prepared by Matt Thornhill, Boomer Project

Survey Objectives:

To gain insight into the current thinking, activities and plans of California public libraries when it comes to today's Baby Boomers. This online survey was conducted in early October 2007, among public libraries through the CALIX email/list service. The survey was done in advance of the "Transforming Life After 50" institute planned for late November 2007. Completed surveys were collected from 230 libraries, and those findings follow. N=230

Overall Findings:

65% of respondents say Boomers are an "important" segment to their library right now, but few responding libraries have specific programs or plans in place to address California's Baby Boomer population (only 6% say with certainty that they have such programs).

- ❖ Only 4 in 10 say they offer any type of programs for "adults."
- ❖ Of those that do offer programs for adults, 76% offer "senior" programs, and only 33% say they offer "Boomer" programs.
 - More than half also say they offer programs for "Mature Adults" and "Active Adults."
 - About 3 in 10 offer programs for "Grandparents," but in general, there are few "life stage" focused programs.
- ❖ Slightly more than 1 in 10 say they use age as a way to segment their adult segments.
- ❖ 7 in 10 libraries don't use age as a way to identify the Boomer generation, and among those who do, there are some misperceptions that Boomers are older than the official definition.
 - Respondents say the youngest Boomers are 48 (actually, only 43 this year).
 - The oldest Boomers, according to the respondents, are on average 62 this year (which is close, actually 61).
- ❖ The handful of Boomer-specific programs currently underway are traditional programs one might expect from a public library - adult literacy, volunteer programs, seminars and so forth. Only one or two mention programs like "life planning" or "re-careering."
- ❖ When asked about other libraries with strong "Boomer" programs, respondents identified programs in Denver, Phoenix, New Jersey, Connecticut and others. In California, the most often mentioned was Alameda County Library and some of their programs.

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- ❖ 7 out of 10 respondents report they have partnered with other organizations to bring forth programs for older adults in their communities. The usual partners are: Senior or Adult Communities, Non-Profits, Local Government.
- ❖ When it comes to long range plans, only 44% of respondents knew with certainty that their library has such a plan. Almost 1 in 3 weren't sure.
 - Boomers are important in 6 out of 10 long range plans.
- ❖ Current programs to engage older adults are focused on traditional “seniors” and include volunteer opportunities, Friends of the Library programs and some educational programs (computers, travel, etc). Very few seem to have truly innovative programs for older adults already in place.
- ❖ 85% of respondents are female, with an average age of 52 (they are BOOMERS!). In fact, 76% are “Baby Boomers,” even though only 64% labeled themselves as Boomers.
- ❖ 60% agreed to be contacted for follow-up conversations.